DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 168 115 EA 011 377

| | |
|---|---|
| AUTHOR | Nagle, John M.; Walker, Harold E. |
| TITLE | The Component Four Implementation Booklet. Community-Based Broad Goal Definition. SPECS: School Planning, Evaluation, and Communication System. |
| INSTITUTION | Oregon Univ., Eugene. Center for Educational Policy and Management. |
| SPONS AGENCY | National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C. |
| PUB DATE | 75 |
| NOTE | 38p.; For related documents, see EA 011 372-379; Not available in paper copy due to small print of original document |
| AVAILABLE FROM | CEPM Publications, Center for Educational Policy and Management, College of Education, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon 97403 ($2.50) |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS. |
| DESCRIPTORS | Community Attitudes; *Community Involvement; *Educational Objectives; Elementary Secondary Education; Guides; Needs Assessment; *Program Development; Program Planning; School Districts |
| IDENTIFIERS | *School Planning Evaluation Communication System |

ABSTRACT

The School Planning, Evaluation, and Communication System (SPECS) is an overall design for districtwide program assessment and development. It is both a way of interrelating planning and evaluation of individual programs and a way of comparing the outcomes of all district programs with the district's community-defined educational goals. Component Four of the five SPECS components is the monitoring subsystem of SPECS and is designed to solicit from the district's citizens their views of preferred district programs. This implementation booklet for Component Four describes the rationale behind the component, discusses the challenge of developing goal statements that can guide program planning and evaluation, and raises a series of nineteen questions about the content and processes of community-based goal definition. Designed for use as a kind of workbook, the booklet can help a group in a school district develop an initial description of their strategy for involving community representatives in broad goal definition. A companion booklet describes in detail how personnel in a particular school district developed and implemented their own strategy for goal definition. (Author/JM)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED168115

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

EA 011 377

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

CEPM

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

**The Component Four Implementation Booklet**

# Community-Based Broad Goal Definition

**Authored by**
**John M. Nagle**
**Harold E. Walker**

**Graphic Design**
**Marvin W. Boggs**

This booklet was developed by staff of the SPECS Program within CASEA, the research and development unit of the Center for Educational Policy and Management (CEPM) at the University of Oregon. CEPM is supported in part by funds from the National Institute of Education (NIE). Opinions expressed in the booklet, however, do not necessarily reflect policies or positions of either CEPM or NIE, and so no official endorsement by either organization should be inferred.

CASEA
Center for Educational Policy and Management
University of Oregon
Eugene, Oregon
1975

# Preface

SPECS is a comprehensive set of procedures and materials that are designed to facilitate program planning and evaluation in schools. Initial development of the system began in 1969. It was implemented on a pilot basis in South Lane School District, Cottage Grove, Oregon, beginning in 1970, thoroughly revised during 1974 and 1975, and is currently being field-tested in a number of school districts throughout the United States. When the SPECS Program terminates in mid-1976, seven years will have been devoted to continuous development, testing, and refinement of the system.

To help personnel in a district learn more about SPECS, plan for its implementation, and begin to make any or all of its five components operational, we have developed several different kinds of materials. They include an illustrated monograph entitled *SPECS: What It Is and What It Does*; a series of implementation booklets relevant to each component of the system; and a set of operational forms for documenting program plans and results.

This particular booklet is the implementation booklet for Component Four of SPECS. It describes the rationale behind that component of activities, discusses the challenge of developing goal statements that can in fact guide program planning and evaluation, and raises a series of nineteen questions about the content and processes of community-based goal definition. Designed for use as a kind of workbook, the booklet can help a group in a school district develop an initial description of their strategy for involving community representatives in broad goal definition.

A companion booklet entitled *Broad Goal Definition in Emerald School District* describes in detail how personnel in that district developed and implemented their particular strategy for goal definition. It describes the processes used to plan the strategy, the specific activities carried out during its implementation, and the resulting product.

# Contents


| | |
|---|---|
| **I. The Rationale and Challenge of Component Four: Community-Based Broad Goal Definition** | 1 |
| **II. Thinking Through a Specific Goal Definition Strategy** | 2 |
| • **Coordination:** How will planning and implementation of the strategy be coordinated? | 3 |
| • **Product:** What will the district's completed goal hierarchy look like? | 5 |
| • **Participation:** Whose opinions will be reflected in the goal hierarchy, and how will they be sampled? | 11 |
| • **Process:** What will be the general characteristics of the district's goal definition strategy? | 14 |
| • **Use:** And when it is complete, what will be done with the district's goal hierarchy? | 18 |
| **III. Potential Benefits of Component Four Activities** | 21 |

# I. The Rationale and Challenge of Component Four: Community-Based Broad Goal Definition

Public elementary and secondary schools are, by definition, public institutions. And at least in the United States, the concept of local control appears to be indelibly stamped upon them. From the outset, therefore, SPECS assumes that the residents of a public school district have both a right and a responsibility, not only to elect school board members and approve bond and tax levies, but also to establish the broad educational expectations that will guide school district programs and activities. SPECS assumes, therefore, that district patrons should periodically be given an opportunity to address the general question, "Given local, state, and national interests, what should our schools be doing for students?"

Moreover, SPECS assumes that every public school district should have an explicit and systematic set of procedures that relate its community-defined educational goals to its ongoing programs and activities. Being able to demonstrate to a school district's patrons that their ideas really do make a difference—that they actually do affect what goes on in the district's classrooms—may well be the most effective way for public school personnel to combat public apathy and increase public support.

Based on these assumptions, Component Four of SPECS involves a school district's community in a continuous effort to identify its broad educational goals. At the same time, the overall systems design of SPECS provides a mechanism for using these goal statements to influence ongoing district programs, but without violating the legitimate prerogatives of the district's professional staff. The monograph entitled *SPECS: What It Is and What It Does* includes a detailed description of that design, but it may be useful here to review it briefly.

Components One, Two, and Three of SPECS constitute its operating subsystem. They are primarily the responsibility of a school district's professional staff, for they are designed to produce information about the "what is" state of district programs—their objectives and actual outcomes, their planned and actual processes, and their budgeted and actual costs. Component Four, the monitoring subsystem of SPECS, is designed to solicit from the district's citizens their views on the "what is preferred" state of district programs. And Component Five, the needs assessment or policy-making subsystem of SPECS, encourages the district's board of education to use this information as a basis for identifying and resolving the most critical discrepancies between program outcomes and community-defined educational goals.



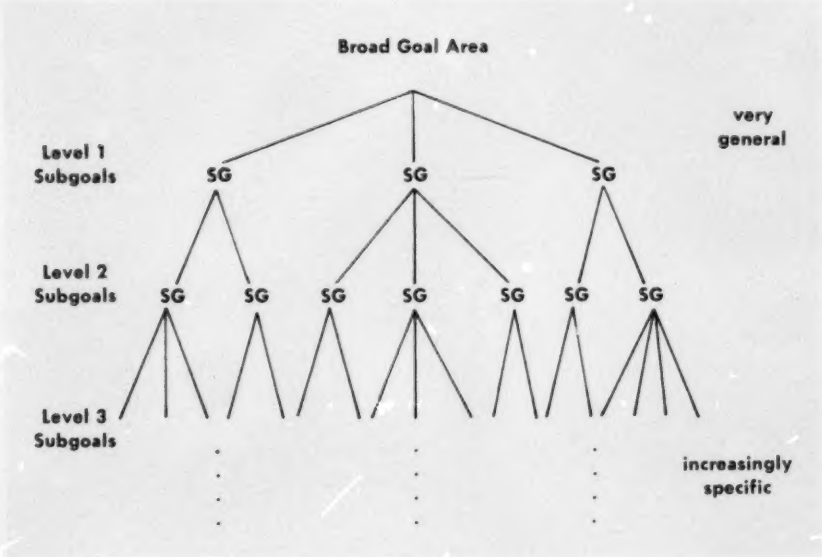
Note that implicit in this overall systems design is a deliberate effort to protect and yet simultaneously interrelate the different perspectives and prerogatives of professional educators, lay citizens, and school board members. For instance, broad goal definition by a district's community, and program planning and evaluation by its professional staff are separate and distinct activities. There is no prescribed order in which they must occur, and neither has more intrinsic worth than the other. In addition, although both sets of activities generate information that is essential to assessing district goals and identifying district needs, it remains for the district's board of education to identify those specific discrepancies between program outcomes and community expectations that require attention and to develop or approve the particular strategies that will be used to reduce the most critical discrepancies.

To a considerable degree, therefore, the challenge of Component Five is essentially a linguistic or semantic one, for it involves identifying common meanings or similar intentions in the program objectives and community goals developed in Components Three and Four respectively. The challenge is intensified, however, by the fact that, inevitably, the two sets of desired outcome statements will vary substantially in specificity. Community-defined goals that address six years of elementary school or twelve years of both elementary and secondary education will, by definition alone, be much less specific than the various short-term program objectives identified by a district's professional staff. And the greater the gap in specificity between the two sets of outcome statements, the more difficult becomes the challenge of Component Five and the less certain its results.

For this reason, it is desirable to work both the professionally generated program objectives and the community-defined broad goals to a relatively common level of specificity by developing multileveled hierarchies of outcome statements. In Component Three, therefore, professional staff are encouraged to group their objectives for operating programs into one or more levels of decreasing specificity. In an instructional area like reading or science, they are encouraged to cluster highly specific unit objectives around a set of less specific, year-long course objectives, and then, in turn, to cluster these course objectives around a set of even less specific, multi-year program objectives.

Similarly, in Component Four, community representatives involved in broad goal definition are encouraged, first, to identify a relatively small number of broad goal areas—like basic skills, physical development, and social development—that have a minimum of overlap and yet adequately cover all desired outcomes of school activities; and then to develop for each broad goal area a hierarchy of multileveled goal statements that define the particular broad goal area with increasingly specific goal statements. The number of levels required for effective matching in Component Five is purely arbitrary and depends upon both the level of specificity of the program objectives reported out in Component Three and the desire of community representatives to be explicit about each logical step in their broad goal hierarchy.

Schematically, the product of Component Four activities will be a series of broad goal areas and related subgoals, each of which looks something like this:




For examples of two broad goal areas, "personal development" and "interpersonal development," that are defined by several levels of subgoals, see the presentation of Emerald School District's current structure of community-defined goals in the third section of the supplementary Component Four booklet entitled *Broad Goal Definition in Emerald School District.*

Clearly, the process of developing broad goal statements that can be meaningfully related to program objectives is a challenging conceptual task. It requires that those involved in the process understand the purpose and organization of a goal hierarchy. It requires that they be able to identify a comprehensive set of broad goal areas relevant to education. And it requires that they be able to move either from the whole to its parts or from the parts to their whole as they attempt to "unpack" each broad goal area into levels of subgoal statements that are clearly related and educationally meaningful.

As Component Four gradually becomes operational in a district, it should be possible to find in the district a widely disseminated structure of broad educational goals that (1) have been generated and reviewed by a representative sample of citizens in the community within the past two or three years, (2) have been formally accepted by the district's board of education as the community's input to Component Five, and (3) are increasingly "matchable" with descriptions of the desired and actual outcomes of district programs.

# II. Thinking Through a Specific Goal Definition Strategy

The nineteen sets of questions and comments that follow are designed to help you think through a specific strategy for involving a representative community group from your school district in broad goal definition. The questions address the following major issues:

- **Coordination:** How will planning and implementation of the strategy be coordinated?
- **Product:** What will the district's completed goal hierarchy look like?
- **Participation:** Whose opinions will be reflected in the goal hierarchy, and how will they be sampled?
- **Process:** What will be the general characteristics of the district's goal definition strategy?
- **Use:** And when it is complete, what will be done with the district's goal hierarchy?

If you respond to each question in the space provided, you will gradually be developing a preliminary description of your desired strategy—a useful point of departure for subsequently preparing a much more detailed and refined description of the strategy.

If you are part of a small committee that has been asked to develop the strategy, you will first want to decide how to proceed through the questions. Among the alternatives are the following:

1. One member of the committee can be asked to respond to all of the questions, develop a preliminary strategy based on his or her responses, and then present it to the remainder of the committee for review, comment, and refinement.
2. A small subcommittee of two or three members can be asked to respond to the questions and develop a preliminary strategy for presentation to the total committee.
3. The nineteen questions can be divided among several subcommittees, and then the various responses can be reviewed by the total committee and modified as necessary to produce a unified strategy.
4. Members of the committee (or of several subcommittees) can respond individually to all nineteen questions and then, by means of open discussion, can attempt to develop a group product that incorporates the best of the individual responses.
5. Or members of the committee can respond to the questions as individuals, share their responses in writing by means of a wallchart or some duplicating process, and then work together to develop a group product based on the individual responses.

Regardless of whether you work through the questions as individuals or as members of a group, recognize the interdependencies among the questions, and be willing to review and revise previous responses as you address each new question. The nineteen questions need not be addressed in the order in which they are presented in the booklet, and additional questions may well arise as you address the particular ones presented here. Finally, you may find it helpful to refer to the companion booklet for Component Four and to its detailed description of the specific goal definition strategy developed and implemented by personnel in Emerald School District.

## Coordination: How will planning and implementation of the strategy be coordinated?

**1. Who will be involved in planning the district's goal definition strategy, and how will they go about it?**

***Comment:***

One approach is to assign responsibility for developing the strategy to a small group of staff members who have special interests and skills relevant to community-based goal definition. Included in this group might be the district's director of community relations, its SPECS coordinator, its public information officer, a board member, and staff members of both its research and development division and its data processing unit.

A second approach is to create a 6-10 member steering committee of community representatives who can, with the help of one or two board members, develop a detailed strategy for involving other members of the community in broad goal definition. Although this second approach helps maximize community input early in Component Four, it requires strong leadership from the participating board members, a highly interested and talented committee of citizens, and a district staff that is willing to accept the committee's decisions.

A third approach, which combines the advantages of the first two, is to assign responsibility for developing the strategy to a steering or coordinating committee that includes both district staff and representatives of the community. As long as the committee does not become too large, this third approach may be the best way to ensure simultaneously a technically sound goal definition strategy and an initial political base for implementing it.

Whoever is selected to plan and develop the district's Component Four goal definition strategy will probably want to engage in some combination of the following activities:

a. careful review of existing educational goals in the district and of the specific processes used to develop and disseminate them.
b. careful review of relevant literature and discussion with personnel from other districts that have recently involved their patrons in broad goal definition.
c. systematic consideration of the various questions in this particular booklet in an effort to describe the desired goal hierarchy and the specific strategy that will be used to develop it.
d. and review and refinement of that description by appropriate individuals and groups, resulting eventually in formal approval of the strategy by the district's board of education.

As soon as possible, a written plan should be prepared that specifies exactly how the strategy will be developed, including a description of the tasks to be completed and the timelines, indicators, and personnel responsible for their completion.

***Response:***

**2. Once the district's goal definition strategy has been developed, who will be responsible for coordinating implementation of its various activities?**

***Comment:***

As is true of any complex activity in a school district, the effort to involve a representative group of citizens in broad goal definition requires careful and continuous coordination of its various activities as they are actually carried out. One way to provide this necessary coordination is to assign primary responsibility for implementing the strategy to one or two of the staff members who were originally involved in developing it. Another approach is to create a steering committee of citizens, staff, or both who can coordinate all implementation activities—perhaps the same group that developed the strategy in the first place. A third approach, probably the most desirable, is to ask both a district staff coordinator and a steering committee of community representatives to coordinate jointly all Component Four activities. The major advantage of this last approach is that it addresses two needs simultaneously: (a) the need for a single individual who has the time, skills, and authority to implement the strategy; and (b) the need to preserve maximum community involvement in Component Four, so that the final product truly represents citizen input to Component Five.

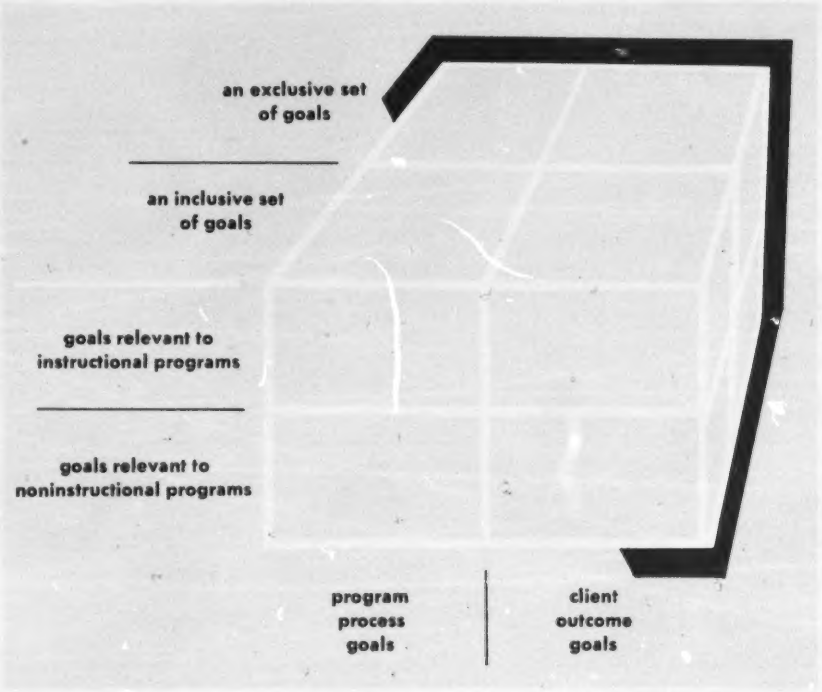
***Response:***



## Product: What will the district's completed goal hierarchy look like?

**3. What will be the nature of the goals identified? That is, to which blocks in the three-dimensional matrix presented in Figure 2 will the district's completed goal hierarchy be addressed?**

**Figure 2**
**Possibilities for Goal Definition**


an exclusive set of goals
an inclusive set of goals
goals relevant to instructional programs
goals relevant to noninstructional programs
program process goals
client outcome goals

Because they raise a number of critical substantive issues, let's examine each dimension of the matrix in more detail by considering four specific questions:

**3.1 Will the district's completed goal hierarchy be limited to goals for instructional programs (like reading, science, elementary education, secondary education, etc.), or will it also include goals for noninstructional programs (like pupil transportation and building administration)? Why?**

***Comment:***

Your response to this question will substantially determine the degree of match possible between program outcomes and community-defined goals in Component Five. If, for example, the district's goal hierarchy is focused primarily on instructional goals (whether for particular courses and instructional areas or for all levels of the district's K-12 instructional program), the Component Five matching process will focus only on instructional outcomes, and there will be few if any community-defined goals with which to match outcome data reported from noninstructional programs. On the other hand, to identify broad goals in Component Four for both instructional and noninstructional programs in a school district is a task of considerable magnitude, requiring a good deal of time, knowledge, and creativity.

Given the focus of schools on instruction and of SPECS on instructional program planning and evaluation, it seems advisable to concentrate initially in Component Four on the outcomes of instructional programs only. As the quantity and quality of outcome data reported from noninstructional programs increases, it will always be possible to expand the district's hierarchy of broad goals to include community-defined goals relevant to those programs as well.

***Response:***

**3.2 Will the district's completed goal hierarchy include only outcome goals, or will it also include process goals? Why?**

***Comment:***

As used here, outcome goals answer the question, "What should our schools be doing for students?" By contrast, process goals address the question, "How should they be doing it?" In instructional programs, for example, outcome goals identify the specific cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning desired of students, whereas process goals identify the particular instructional arrangements, materials, and methodologies that will be employed by classroom teachers to help students achieve those desired learning outcomes.

To preserve the distinction which has already been made between community and professional prerogatives, it seems advisable to focus a district's Component Four activities on client outcome goals and to avoid formal community involvement in specifying particular program processes for achieving those goals.

***Response:***



**3.3 Will the district's completed goal hierarchy be as comprehensive as possible, or will it represent only a subset of goals that have been selected from a much larger set of possible goals? Why?**

***Comment:***

This distinction has considerable implications both for developing a Component Four strategy and later for matching community-defined goals with program outcomes in Component Five.

Although it is time-consuming, developing an inclusive hierarchy of goals is valuable because it provides the district with a comprehensive array of community-defined goals that address the outcomes of all possible operating programs. On the other hand, identifying a subset of possible goals, such as those in need of immediate attention or those that can be achieved most effectively and efficiently, provides the district with a set of goals that have been selected on some rational basis for special attention. The major benefit of a selective set is its focus; the major benefit of an inclusive set is its comprehensiveness. A selective set allows only partial matching in Component Five; an inclusive set allows total matching.

Given that public schools have little choice but to attend to all goals for all students at all times, it seems advisable to build a hierarchy of community-defined educational goals in Component Four that is as comprehensive and inclusive as possible.

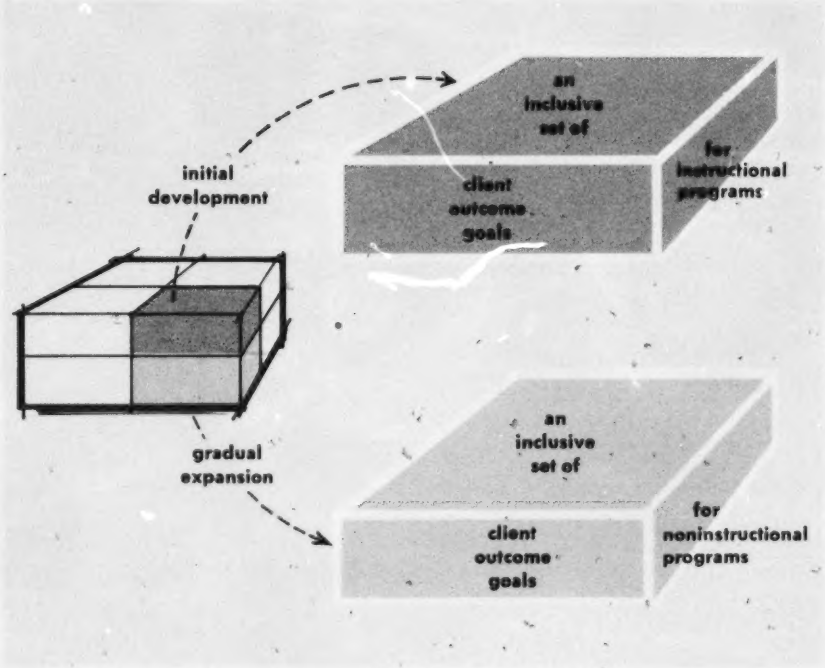
***Response:***

**3.4 What then will be the nature of the goals identified in the district's completed goal hierarchy? To which blocks in the three-dimensional matrix presented in Figure 2 will they be addressed?**

***Comment:***

Given the intentions of SPECS and the recommendations offered above in response to Questions 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3, it seems wise to develop initially in Component Four *an inclusive set of client outcome goals relevant to instructional programs.* Gradually, as it becomes desirable and useful to do so, that initial goal hierarchy can be expanded to include comparable outcome goals for noninstructional programs.

**Figure 3**
**Phasing into Broad Goal Definition**




***Response:***

**4. Will priorities be assigned to the goal statements in the district's completed goal hierarchy? Why or why not? If yes, by whom will the priorities be set?**

***Comment:***

It is always possible to assign priorities to goals—to indicate, for instance, that goals a, b, and c are more important than goals d and e, which in turn are more important than goals f, g, and h. Furthermore, it is always possible to identify priorities among goals in one of two ways: (a) by rating each goal in terms of some ideal criterion—its feasibility, its importance to students, its public appeal, etc.; or (b) by ranking each goal in comparison with all other goals on some common criterion. Because the process of rating goals on some scale forces consideration of each goal in isolation, it does not automatically result in a list of priorities, but it does produce raw data from which priorities can be arithmetically derived. On the other hand, because the process of ranking goals forces consideration of each goal in relation to all other goals, it leads directly to a list of priorities. Of the two processes, ranking is considerably more difficult for respondents, for it usually requires that multiple comparisons be made simultaneously.

Regardless of the process employed, the important question to be answered is, "When is it really useful to assign priorities to goal statements?" Obviously, if a subset of goals is desired, one way to identify that subset—as well as the relative priority of goals within the subset—is to engage in some kind of process for rating or ranking the various goal statements. On the other hand, if what the district needs is a comprehensive and inclusive set of goals, there is probably no need to ask community representatives to assign priorities to those goals. Rather, it seems more useful to ask a board-appointed committee of citizens and professional staff to assign priorities to the specific discrepancies that are likely to be identified later in Component Five when actual and desired program outcomes are compared with the community-defined goals. In this way, district priorities can be assigned to clearly identifiable district needs or gaps between "what is" and "what is preferred," rather than to goal statements that represent, by definition, descriptions of only "what is preferred."

***Response:***

**5. Is there any need to limit the size of the district's goal hierarchy—for example, its number of broad goal areas, the number of subgoals related to any one broad goal area, or its total number of goal statements? If so, how should it be limited?**

***Comment:***

Depending upon the specific procedures followed, the broad goal areas in a district's goal hierarchy can be either predetermined on some rational basis, or derived inductively from the specific goal statements identified by community representatives. Obviously, therefore, the number of goal areas in the hierarchy is always arbitrary; to be manageable, however, that number probably should be less than fifteen. By one interpretation, Emerald School District's community-defined goal hierarchy has only two broad goal areas—one related to a student's personal development, the other related to his or her interpersonal development. By another interpretation, however, if its initial levels are expanded, the hierarchy has thirteen broad goal areas, including such clusters as basic skills, the arts and humanities, the sciences, and moral values.

Equally arbitrary is the number of subgoals related to each broad goal area and the total number of goal statements in the complete hierarchy. As the number of subgoals for any one broad goal area increases, the coverage of that goal area becomes more complete, and the subgoals become more specific, both of which facilitate efforts in Component Five to match the subgoals to program outcomes. However, as the total number of goal statements in each broad goal area increases, the final goal hierarchy becomes more difficult to format, read, and reproduce, and the number of possible comparisons that must be examined in Component Five increases substantially. In Emerald School District's goal hierarchy, each of the thirteen broad goal areas is defined by two to fifteen subgoals, and the complete hierarchy includes a total of 104 goal statements for matching with the district's program outcomes in Component Five.

***Response:***



**6. How will the goal statements in the district's completed goal hierarchy be formatted and phrased?**

***Comment:***

The final product of the goal definition effort may be simply a series of narrative paragraphs, each focused on a single broad goal area and comprised of all the subgoals related to that goal area. Or it may resemble the goal hierarchy developed in Emerald School District, in which the different levels of goal statements are clearly distinguishable and each path through the hierarchy reads as a complete sentence. Or it may consist simply of a series of one- or two-word phrases, each of which serves as a topical heading for a cluster of implicit subgoals.

There is certainly no single way to phrase goal statements, but, however it is done, the resulting hierarchy should be characterized by (a) clarity of both its individual goal statements and the relationships across levels of statements; (b) ease of presentation, reading, and reproduction; and (c) a high degree of probability that the most specific goal statements in the hierarchy can be easily matched with program outcome data developed in Component Three.

***Response:***

**7. Will there be a single goal hierarchy for the entire district or multiple hierarchies? Why?**

***Comment:***

To this point in our commentary, we have assumed that a total district is the most useful unit of analysis for developing a hierarchy of community-defined goals and later for assessing those goals in Component Five. Consider for a moment, however, two other possibilities. It may be either logically or politically useful to break the total district into several geographic areas—for example, each high school attendance area or even each individual school building—and then to generate and assess community goals within each separate subarea of the district. Or it may make sense to divide the district's total instructional program into two or more subprograms—for example, elementary and secondary education—and to generate and assess community goals within those separate subprograms in the curriculum.

Both of these alternatives represent an effort to decentralize goal definition and goal assessment and thereby move both processes closer to the clients who will be affected by them. However, neither alternative precludes treating the total district as a unit of analysis for at least some goal definition and assessment. For example, it would be quite possible to ask representatives of the district's total community to define a set of goals for the entire district, but then, simultaneously, to encourage specific subgroups within the community to supplement the common goals with their own individual goals.

The most important consideration here is whether those involved in the goal-setting process—citizens, students, staff, and board members—should be encouraged to view the district as an integrated whole or as a loose confederation of separate schools, neighborhoods, or programs.

***Response:***



## Participation: Whose opinions will be reflected in the goal hierarchy, and how will they be sampled?

**8. Who will constitute the district's community for purposes of defining broad educational goals?**

***Comment:***

The challenge here—one of definition—is to identify the groups of individuals who have a legitimate right to be heard in any community-based goal definition effort. This does not necessarily mean that every group or individual identified will in fact actively participate in the process, but it does mean that to the extent possible, the district's final goal hierarchy will reflect the views of a majority of those identified.

Defining the district's community, therefore, is tantamount to defining the total population from which a sample of opinions will be drawn. One useful approach is to begin by defining the district's community as "all individuals who reside within its boundaries," and then to modify that definition as necessary in response to the following two related questions:

- Should some individuals included within the definition be excluded (e.g., preschoolers, students, district staff, etc.)?
- Should any individuals excluded by the definition be included (e.g., district staff who reside outside the district, nonresident students who attend the district's schools, parents of those nonresident students, nonresidents who own property in the district, etc.)?

Again, the critical task here is to identify those individuals in the district's community who have a legitimate right to be involved in determining the broad educational goals that will eventually be matched with the district's program outcomes.

***Response:***

**9. How large a sample of the district's defined community will be actively involved in defining broad educational goals, and how will that sample be selected?**

***Comment:***

A variety of factors influence a decision on sample size, including the opinion-gathering procedures to be employed, the district's ability to handle large quantities of information, the desire of school board members to make Component Four goal-setting activities highly visible, and the availability of time, space, and support staff to carry out the district's planned goal definition strategy. In general, as the number of individuals actively involved in the strategy increases, so too do both the complexity of the strategy and the representativeness of the district's completed goal hierarchy. In Emerald School District, approximately 125 individuals were involved as community representatives in the district's goal definition strategy.

Equally as important as sample size are the specific procedures used to identify members of the sample. Several alternatives are available, although none can guarantee a completely representative sample, particularly when the population being sampled is as diverse as a public school district's community. One of these alternative procedures is to identify a simple *random sample*. Using census reports, telephone directories, tax rolls, and other public sources of information, a list can be developed of the district's defined community. When that list is as complete as possible, a table of random numbers, which gives each name on the list an equal chance of being selected, can be used to identify a community sample of any desired size. Presumably, the opinions held by members of the random sample will be representative of the opinions held by members of the total community.

A second alternative is to identify a *stratified sample*. This is particularly useful when it is important to ensure that the community sample includes specific groups or points of view—for instance, that it reflects demographic differences in the community (e.g., differences in race, ethnic background, labor force composition, family income, level of educational attainment, etc.) or the opinions of groups that are particularly relevant to schools (e.g., professional staff, students, the parents of school-age children, etc.). To identify a stratified sample, the different groups that should be included in the sample must first be selected

and the current proportion of community members in each group identified. A sample of any desired size can then be selected in such a way that it includes a comparable proportion of members from each stratified group. If, for example, students comprise one-quarter of the district's defined community, parents comprise half of it, and the remaining quarter consists of adults who have never been parents, a sample stratified in terms of these three groups would include the exact same proportion of students, parents, and nonparents.

There are also other less formal, but perhaps more realistic or practical ways of identifying a community sample. One approach, for example, is simply to hand pick the members of the sample on the basis of some predetermined criteria, e.g., length of residence in the district, income level, reputation as a community leader, age, expertise, etc. Another approach is to identify all of the major organizations and pressure groups in the community—social, political, business, religious, governmental, service, educational, recreational, etc.—and then, depending upon the sample size desired, to invite each group to identify a small number of individuals who can represent that group and participate as part of the district's community sample. Yet a third approach is to identify a small number of individuals who meet certain predetermined criteria for membership in the community sample, and then to ask each of those individuals to identify a second group of individuals who meet the same criteria. Very quickly, as the Component Four Steering Committee in Emerald School District discovered, this kind of chain-letter selection process can produce a sizeable community sample.

***Response:***



**10. What incentives will community representatives be given to participate in the district's Component Four goal definition activities?**

***Comment:***

Determining the size and characteristics of the district's sample of community representatives, identifying members of that sample, and making initial contact with them are relatively easy to do compared with the challenge of successfully stimulating community representatives to actually participate in the district's goal definition activities. Although there is no way to guarantee full participation by everyone selected, each of the following will certainly help encourage participation: regular personal contact; a clear sense of purpose for the group; well organized and challenging tasks that give participants a sense of accomplishment; real opportunities to contribute; minimal delays in getting on with the job; visible evidence of progress; some public recognition; and clear indications that the goals being identified will indeed have an impact on school district operations.

***Response:***

## Process: What will be the general characteristics of the district's goal definition strategy?

**11. Will the district's community representatives primarily generate information, select information, or react to information? Why?**

***Comment:***

At one extreme, community representatives can generate all goal statements from scratch and then eventually organize them into a broad goal hierarchy. At the other extreme, the developmental process can be avoided completely, and community representatives can be asked simply to review and approve an already developed hierarchy of goals, like that, for instance, developed in Emerald School District. Between these two extremes are numerous possible strategies that involve community representatives in different degrees of developing their own goal hierarchy by choosing selectively from existing goals and/or generating new ones.

The tradeoffs among these various approaches, like the tradeoffs between any set of "open-ended" and "forced choice" questions, are considerable. A strategy that requires community representatives to generate all goal statements from scratch requires time, creativity, and a good deal of knowledge about public schools, but it also allows participants to develop a real sense of involvement in the process and ownership of its product. On the other hand, if community representatives are asked to create a goal hierarchy by selecting from a catalogue of possible goal statements, the requirements of time, creativity, and knowledge about schools are reduced substantially, but the challenge of developing an integrated and complete goal hierarchy increases. The easiest approach, of course, is to ask community representatives to review, modify, and approve an already developed goal hierarchy; if this approach is handled poorly, however, participants will undoubtedly view it as simply a request to rubber-stamp someone else's product.

***Response:***

**12. How much opportunity will community representatives have for face-to-face interaction? If not a great deal, how will information be generated and shared during the goal definition process?**

***Comment:***

It is possible to design goal definition strategies that involve participants in varying degrees of face-to-face interaction. Whereas committees and task forces can be organized to provide community representatives with ample opportunities to meet one another, discuss their opinions, and eventually come to consensus on a hierarchy of goals, questionnaires and response forms exchanged by mail reduce the need for meetings and give participants an opportunity to express their opinions in the privacy of their own homes. Although face-to-face interaction certainly encourages the exchange of ideas and contributes substantially to building a group product, it also requires a great deal of time and energy, and it allows the more outspoken members of a group to play a dominant role in the group's deliberations.

In Emerald School District, members of the district's Component Four Steering Committee tried to incorporate in their goal definition strategy the major benefits of face-to-face interaction without also incurring its major costs. They invited members of the Community Advisory Committee to attend four meetings to exchange opinions, generate alternatives, and stimulate each other, but whenever specific responses were needed from members of the Committee, these were solicited after the open meetings by means of questionnaires mailed to their homes.

***Response:***



**13. What time constraints will be placed upon the district's goal definition strategy?**

***Comment:***

For example, how much time will be budgeted for the total process—from selection of a community sample to presentation of a completed goal hierarchy to the board of education? How much time will be asked of those who participate? When will the process begin, and when will it be completed? Answers to these specific questions will set helpful parameters for the district's goal definition strategy.

***Response:***

**14. What methods for gathering opinions will be incorporated in the district's goal definition strategy, and how specifically will they be used?**

***Comment:***

Many different methods can be employed to gather opinions from the citizens of a school district's community or from a sample of those citizens, including (a) questionnaires and rating forms, (b) interviews in person or by telephone, (c) committees and task forces, (d) public hearings, and (e) presentations in the public media. These different opinion-gathering methods vary considerably in their developmental costs, the kind of involvement they require of participants, their response rates, the degree of bias they reflect, and the sampling procedures they entail.

Questionnaires are usually most effective when they require brief responses on a relatively small number of questions. But designing a questionnaire that meets these criteria and still produces useful information requires considerable expertise, time, and resources. Moreover, the rate of return on written questionnaires is often quite low, particularly when they are simply mailed to respondents who have received little or no prior information or who have little incentive to respond.

Interviews are much more expensive per respondent than written questionnaires, but their response rate is usually quite high. Developing an effective interview schedule is no less difficult than developing a good questionnaire, but the difficulties are compounded by the need to train enough competent interviewers to conduct a sufficient number of interviews.

From the viewpoint of a community representative, serving on a committee or task force is probably the most time-consuming method for providing opinions. Moreover, given the biases inherent in creating intact workgroups and the challenge of achieving consensus in any group, committees rarely produce a product that is truly representative of either their own members or the larger group they represent.

Conducting public hearings and using the mass media to solicit opinions enable an entire community to participate, and they are rarely very costly, but both methods usually suffer from a relatively poor response rate and from a lack of representativeness in the respondents and so in the information they provide.

***Response:***

15. **What background information will be given to community representatives, when will they receive it, and how will it be organized and presented?**

***Comment:***

For example, will community representatives be given information about the district's current educational philosophy or its current district-level and program-level goals? Will they be informed about current state guidelines and goals for public schools? Will they receive sample goals or goal hierarchies developed in other school districts? Will they be given the results of any relevant opinion polls conducted in the community during recent years? As members of Emerald School District's Community Advisory Committee discovered, all of these different kinds of information can be extremely valuable to those involved in developing the district's broad goal hierarchy, particularly if the information is well organized, clearly presented, and directly relevant to specific activities or steps in the district's overall strategy.

***Response:***



## Use: And when it is complete, what will be done with the district's goal hierarchy?

16. **How will the completed goal hierarchy be presented to the district's board of education, by whom, and for what purpose?**

***Comment:***

Once the goal hierarchy has been developed by the district's community representatives and they have given it their final approval, it should be formally presented to the district's board of education for review and reaction. Eventually, the board should be encouraged to officially acknowledge the completed goal hierarchy as the community's input to the process of matching community expectations and program outcomes in Component Five. However, it is probably unwise to ask the board to "adopt" the goals, since this would tend to blur distinctions between community and board prerogatives by making the goals board policy rather than allowing them to be community input to the board's decision-making processes. To the extent possible, the district's goal hierarchy should always retain the stamp of the community.

***Response:***

**17. Once the school board has acknowledged the district's completed goal hierarchy as the community's input to Component Five, to whom and how will it be disseminated?**

***Comment:***

If the completed goal hierarchy is to have any legitimacy, it must be widely recognized as the community's input to policy decisions made by the district's board of education and to program planning and evaluation carried out by the district's professional staff. Wide dissemination of the hierarchy to individuals throughout the district, visible display of it in prominent places, and frequent references to it during school board meetings and other public sessions will all contribute to its credibility as an expression of the community's expectations for its schools.

***Response:***



**18. What specific procedures will be used to involve community representatives in a systematic review and updating of the district goal hierarchy, and how often will these procedures be implemented?**

***Comment:***

As indicated earlier, each of the five components of SPECS is considered to be an on-going activity in a school district, for if the district is to be an effective problem-solving system, it must continuously monitor and update its information base regarding both "what is" in district programs and "what is preferred" by district patrons. For this reason, the district's community-defined goal hierarchy probably should be reviewed and updated at least every two or three years, and this review should be conducted by a group that is just as representative of the district's larger community as the group that originally developed the district's goals.

Possible approaches to this periodic review of the district's goal hierarchy range from complete redevelopment of all of its subgoal statements to a more selective review that allows deletion of some subgoal statements and addition of others. For practical reasons, it certainly seems undesirable to employ a strategy for annual review and updating that requires a total dismantling of the original goal hierarchy. On the other hand, it does seem desirable to take a careful look every three or four years at the entire hierarchy. In Emerald School District, the district's Component Four Steering Committee attempted to develop a review strategy that adequately balanced both of these perspectives.

***Response:***

**19. Finally, what will be the chronology of activities in the district's total goal definition strategy?**

***Comment:***

By considering your responses to the above questions, it should now be possible to prepare a preliminary description of the specific strategy that will be used to involve your district's community in broad goal definition. To the extent possible, this narrative or outline description of your district's goal definition strategy should indicate specifically who will be involved, what they will do, when they will do it, what the product of their various activities will be, and how those products and activities will be evaluated. When it eventually has been expanded and refined, the description and any accompanying figures or diagrams can be used both to explain Component Four activities to others and to guide actual implementation of the activities in the district.

***Response:***

***Response:***

***Response:***

***Response:***

# III. Potential Benefits of Component Four Activities

There are two dimensions of Component Four of SPECS: broad goal definition itself and community involvement in the goal definition process. The benefits of implementing Component Four can be related to these two dimensions.

Broad goals, by definition, give us a sense of overall direction. Even though we may never actually achieve them, they give us something to strive for, a reason for planning how to get there, and a basis for assessing progress. In schools, of course, goals give us a clear sense of what we are trying to do for students and thus a basis for planning, budgeting, and evaluating specific instructional activities and programs. In addition, if our broad educational goals are clearly defined, we can interrelate program, course, and instructional goals in such a way that each level of goals contributes to achievement of goals at the next higher level. Developing this kind of curricular scope and sequence is a continuing challenge for staff in any public school district.

On the second dimension, there are at least three major benefits of involving a school district's community in the process of broad goal definition. First, it helps to fulfill a constitutional guarantee that those who pay the bill for public schools be involved in determining the ends or purposes for which their tax dollars will be spent. Entirely consistent with the concept of local control of education, community involvement in broad goal definition acknowledges the legitimate right of local citizens, not only to select board members and vote on money issues, but also to establish the broad expectations that will guide district programs and activities.

Second, the social and economic conditions under which public schools operate have rapidly changed during the past several decades. Public school districts are less and less insulated from public scrutiny. They no longer enjoy the public's traditional, almost unquestioned support of education. The educational dollar has been stretched almost beyond its ability to meet current demands. And the pressure on schools for greater public accountability continues to grow. Community involvement in broad goal definition may well be one of the most effective and constructive ways by which a school district can open itself to its public, monitor changes in its environment, establish a legitimate basis for public accountability, and justify the need for increased public support of its educational activities.





And third, community involvement in broad goal definition can be an effective vehicle for increasing communication and the flow of information among the patrons and professional staff of a school district. Patrons can become better informed about what schools can and cannot do, while teachers and administrators can learn first-hand what the public expects of its schools. Given this two-way flow of information and the continuous involvement of community representatives in broad goal definition, it should be possible to develop gradually a nucleus of interested, talented, and active patrons whose political support can be a valuable asset to the district. And at the same time, given an explicit set of community-defined educational goals, it should be possible for a district's board of education to assess with increasing accuracy the degree to which district programs actually contribute to achievement of those community-defined goals.